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REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMISSION ON PREVENTION OF DISCRIMINATION AND PROTECTION OF MINORITIES ON ITS FORTY-SECOND SESSION

Written statement submitted by Four Directions Council, a non-governmental organization in consultative status (category II)

The Secretary-General has received the following communication which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV).

[7 January 1991]

INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE WORLD'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

1. In its resolution 45/164 of 18 December 1990, the General Assembly decided to proclaim 1993 the International Year for the World's Indigenous People, and invited indigenous organizations to consider the contributions they can make to the success of the Year, with a view to presenting these contributions to the Commission on Human Rights. We are pleased to submit the following recommendations for the programme of activities for the Year, on behalf of our constituent indigenous peoples in North America.

2. We endorse the general approach taken by Mr. Eide and Mrs. Mbonu in their working paper on possible United Nations activities for an International Year for Indigenous Rights (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/41), and welcome the decision of the Sub-Commission, in its resolution 1990/29 of 31 August 1990, that this could provide a useful framework for the preparation of the programme of activities for the Year.

3. We believe that the programme for the Year should concentrate on the operational side of the United Nations, with priority being given to projects benefiting indigenous peoples in developing countries.

4. United Nations bodies and specialized agencies should focus their contributions to the Year on improving the quality of their existing operational activities, wherever they affect indigenous peoples. This should include the following three elements:

(a) Popular participation - involving indigenous people directly in the planning and implementation of projects which may affect them; 1/

(b) Demonstration projects - funding a small number of special projects in 1993 which address the needs and concerns of indigenous people, giving priority to projects involving appropriate, environmentally-sound and sustainable development;

(c) Impact assessment - preparing guidelines and procedures designed to ensure respect for the rights of indigenous peoples, and for the integrity of their environments, in the planning and execution of future projects. 2/

5. The programme of activities for the Year should have a lasting impact on programme delivery. It should result in changes in the way the United Nations itself, and its Member States, work with indigenous people and address indigenous peoples' concerns. We believe this can be achieved most effectively by concentrating available resources on a small number of well-conceived, concrete projects involving a small number of indigenous communities in different countries and regions, which can provide a baseline of practical experience for improving the quality of future national and international development activities.

6. Priority should be given to activities benefiting the largest and most vulnerable concentrations of indigenous people in the developing countries. Indigenous peoples in industrialized countries should be included, as far as possible, as partners in these activities, and as contributors of technical and human resources. This could involve:

(a) Establishing networks of indigenous organizations and communities for the sharing of information and experience in particular fields such as primary health care, bilingual education and forestry;

(b) Pairing indigenous communities from developing and industrialized countries in the planning and implementation of specific projects, with the aim of promoting an exchange of resources and expertise, and building longer-term working partnerships;

(c) Contracting or secondment of indigenous persons and organizations with relevant expertise, to carry out projects for the benefit of indigenous communities elsewhere in the world. 3/

7. Responsibility for co-ordinating activities for the Year should be shared by the Department for International Economic Co-operation and the Centre for Human Rights. This will ensure an appropriate balance between the aims of the Year (the realization of indigenous peoples' rights) and the means for achieving these aims (improving the quality of operational activities).

Each participating United Nations body and specialized agency should be requested to designate an appropriate professional staff member by January 1992 to serve as its focal point for the Year. Direct involvement of indigenous peoples' organizations in planning and co-ordination will be essential, and the focal point within each participating body and agency should arrange consultations with indigenous organizations as early as possible in 1992.

8. Participating United Nations body and specialized agencies should be encouraged to set aside a portion of their 1993 operational funds, for projects that advance the aims of the Year. Funds from voluntary contributions made in accordance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 45/164 should be allocated among United Nations bodies and agencies in proportion to the size of their commitments of internal financial resources to projects connected with the Year ("matching" on a proportional basis). Governments, in turn, should be encouraged to supplement, to the extent possible, the United Nations funding of the projects carried out in their countries.

9. We have prepared a list of United Nations bodies and agencies that we believe could make the most important contributions to the success of the Year (see annex), indicating for each one of them some possible areas of operational emphasis. In addition, we believe that important roles can be played by a number of regional organizations, especially the Organization of American States; the Inter-American Indian Institute; the Commission for Indigenous Affairs established under the Treaty for Amazonian Co-operation; and, because of the comparable history of Africa, and the African region's experience in grass-roots development and protection of the environment, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Organization for African Unity. 4/

10. At its present session, the Commission should consider adopting a framework of basic principles for planning the programme of activities for the Year. In particular the Commission should:

(a) Reaffirm the operational focus of the Year, as recommended in the working paper prepared for the Sub-Commission by Mr. Eide and Mrs. Mbonu;

(b) Recommend that the planning and implementation of the programme of activities for the Year be co-ordinated jointly by the Department for International Economic Co-operation and the Centre for Human Rights;

(c) Invite relevant United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to circulate notes verbales to indigenous peoples' organizations, with a view to soliciting proposals for a small number of high-quality, high-impact projects in their respective fields of competence;

(d) Invite the Working Group on Indigenous Populations to consider the contributions it should make to the success of the Year;

(e) Invite Mr. Eide and Mrs. Mbonu to continue their consideration of possible United Nations activities for the Year in accordance with Sub-Commission resolution 1990/29;

(f) Reaffirm the central and indispensable role which should be played by indigenous peoples' organizations themselves in the planning and execution of the programme of activities for the Year.

Notes

1/ On participation in operational activities, see General Assembly resolution 44/211 of 22 December 1989, para. 6; United Nations Development Programme Governing Council decision 90/18 of 22 June 1990; and, with reference to indigenous peoples, resolution I of 27 June 1989 of the seventy-fifth International Labour Conference. Participation is stressed in the working paper prepared by Mr. Eide and Mrs. Mbonu, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/41, paras. 24 and 29.

2/ See General Comment No. 2 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/1990/23, annex III) and para. 190 of the report of the Global Consultation on the Right to Development as a Human Right (E/CN.4/1990/9/Rev.1).

3/ See para. 9 of the draft programme of activities for the Year prepared by Mr. Eide and Mrs. Mbonu, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/41, annex II.

4/ See para. 7 of the draft programme of activities for the Year prepared by Mr. Eide and Mrs. Mbonu, E/CN.4/Sub.2/1990/41, annex II.

Annex

Suggested areas of operational emphasis for the International Year for the World's Indigenous People

United Nations bodies

Department for International Economic and Social Affairs (DIESA)

- Mechanisms for collecting data on indigenous peoples, and for including this information in future editions of the World Social Situation (through the Statistical Office).

United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT)

- Alternative housing designs, appropriate to indigenous peoples' environments and cultures, utilizing readily-available materials and labour.

United Nations Centre for Social Development

- Strengthening and obtaining recognition for indigenous systems of social control and criminal justice.

- Strengthening indigenous families, including extended and other forms of traditional families, with a view also to contributing to the International Year of the Family (1994).

United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations (UNCTC)

- Continuing and expanding the collection of information on the impacts of transnational investments and operations on the lands of indigenous peoples (see Sub-Commission resolution 1990/27).

- Research and training on the management of foreign investment, and marketing of indigenous peoples' resources and products.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

- Building community programmes for culturally-appropriate child protection services and substitute care.

- Addressing the cultural concerns of indigenous peoples in the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

- Developing guidelines and procedures for assessing the impacts of United Nations operational activities on indigenous peoples.

- Building networks of indigenous women in different parts of the world (through UNIFEM).

- Documenting, evaluating, and where appropriate strengthening indigenous peoples' traditional methods of population management (through UNFPA).

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

- Documenting and strengthening indigenous peoples' traditional methods of managing ecosystems and living resources.

- Effective participation of indigenous people in the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

Specialized agencies

Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

- Integrating indigenous peoples' knowledge of ecosystems into the sustainable management of forests, fisheries and farmland.

- Strengthening indigenous communities' training and capacity for environmental research and resource management.

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

- Appropriate and environmentally-sound modernization of fishing, farming, and other traditional subsistence economies.

- Evaluating and improving nutrition in communities affected by recent changes in their means of subsistence.

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

- Educating indigenous peoples about ILO Convention No. 169, and promoting its widespread ratification and implementation.

- Community initiatives for appropriate and environmentally-sound rural development, employment and the empowerment of indigenous women (see resolution I, seventy-fifth International Labour Conference).

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

- Developing improved materials and methods for the bilingual and bicultural education of indigenous children.

- Developing and promoting appropriate forms of primary science education for indigenous communities.

- Locating, recovering and conserving cultural property (see Sub-Commission resolution 1990/25).

World Health Organization (WHO)

- Integrating traditional medicine into local and national health care systems.

- Strengthening the capacity of indigenous communities to provide primary health care and emergency care.

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

- Community-level training in the effective use of international intellectual property law (Sub-Commission resolution 1990/27).

- Documenting and obtaining protection for traditional indigenous arts, and for their knowledge of ecosystems and plant varieties.